Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Claims 1-9 cancelled.

10. (new) A Process for the preparation of an aqueous solution of carboxymethylcellulose containing from about 20 to about 40 wt% of carboxymethylcellulose, having a Brookfield viscosity at 20°C and 20 rpm of from about 2000 to about 5000 mPa*s, comprising:

a. dispersing from about 20 to about 30 pbw (parts by weight) of carboxymethylcellulose having a degree of substitution of between about 0.5 and about 1.0 and whose aqueous solutions at 4 wt% have a Brookfield viscosity of from about 20 to about 1000 mPa*s, at 20°C and 20 rpm in 100 pbw of a mixture of water and alcohol containing from about 30 to about 60 wt% of alcohol to form a dispersion;

b. heating the dispersion at a temperature of from about 35 to about 55 °C and adding from about 0.5 to about 10 pbw of a cellulase preparation for each 100 pbw of carboxymethylcellulose to the dispersion, and stirring the dispersion at this temperature for from about 60 to about 200 minutes;

c. removing the alcohol from the mixture by distillation;

d. deactivating the cellulase preparation by alkalinizing and heating the mixture at from about 60 to about 70°C for from about 20 to about 120 minutes; and

e. cooling the mixture at from about 40 to about 55°C and adding from about 1 to about 5 pbw of a 30 to 35 wt% aqueous solution of hydrogen peroxide per each 100 pbw of carboxymethylcellulose to the dispersion and stirring the dispersion at from about 55 to about 70°C for from about 15 to about 45 minutes to form an aqueous solution of carboxymethylcellulose.

11. (new) The process of claim 1., further comprising adjusting the carboxymethylcellulose concentration of the aqueous solution of carboxymethylcellulose by adding water to the aqueous solution of carboxymethylcellulose.

12. (new) The process of claim 1., wherein the alcohol is ethanol or isopropanol.

13. (new) The process of claim 1., wherein the carboxymethylcellulose which is dispersed in step a. has a degree of substitution between about 0.6 and about 0.8.

14. (new) The process of claim 1., wherein the carboxymethylcellulose which is dispersed in step a. has a Brookfield viscosity at 4 wt% of between about 20 and about 500 mPa*s, at 20°C and 20 rpm.

15. (new) The process of claim 1., wherein the cellulase preparation of step b. is a preparation comprising natural cellulase complexes having endoglucanase activity (ES-I, EG-II, EGIII), exoglucanase activity (CBH-I and CBH-II), and ß-glucosidase activity.

16. (new) The process of claim 1., wherein the cellulase preparation of step b. is selected from the group consisting of a cellulase preparation without CBH-I but enriched in EG-I and EG-II, a cellulase preparation having a single EG-III activity expressed by a cloned gene, and mixtures thereof.

17. (new) The process of claim 1., wherein the mixture of water and alcohol contains from 40 to 50 wt% alcohol.

18. (new) The process of claim 1., wherein the pH of step a. is adjusted to from about 5 to about 7 using an acid or base.

19. (new) The process of claim 18., wherein the acid is acetic acid and the base is NaOH.

20. (new) The process of claim 1., further comprising a step f. of adding a catalase to the solution and stirring the solution.

21. (new) The process of claim 20., further comprising adjusting the carboxymethylcellulose concentration of the aqueous solution of carboxymethylcellulose by

adding water to the aqueous solution of carboxymethylcellulose.

22. (new) The process of claim 1., wherein the distillation is a vacuum distillation.

23 (new) The process of claim 21., wherein the distillation is a vacuum distillation.

24. (new) The process of claim 1., where in the cellulase in the cellulase preparation is derived from microorganisms selected from the group consisting of *Trichoderma, Streptomyces, Aspergillius, Humicola, Mycelophthora, Chrisosporium, Melanocarpus*, and mixtures thereof.

25. (new) The process of claim 1., wherein the aqueous solution of carboxymethylcellulose is stable.

26. (new) An aqueous solution of carboxymethylcellulose containing from about 20 to about 40 wt% of carboxymethylcellulose, having a Brookfield viscosity at 20°C and 20 rpm of from about 2000 to about 5000 mPa*s, prepared by a method comprising:

a. dispersing from about 20 to about 30 pbw (parts by weight) of carboxymethylcellulose having a degree of substitution of between about 0.5 and about 1.0 and whose aqueous solutions at 4 wt% have a Brookfield viscosity of from about 20 to about 1000 mPa*s, at 20°C and 20 rpm in 100 pbw of a mixture of water and alcohol containing from about 30 to about 60 wt% of alcohol to form a dispersion;

b. heating the dispersion at a temperature of from about 35 to about 55 °C and adding from about 0.5 to about 10 pbw of a cellulase preparation for each 100 pbw of carboxymethylcellulose to the dispersion, and stirring the dispersion at this temperature for from about 60 to about 200 minutes;

c. removing the alcohol from the mixture by distillation;

d. deactivating the cellulase preparation by alkalinizing and heating the mixture at from about 60 to about 70°C for from about 20 to about 120 minutes; and

e. cooling the mixture at from about 40 to about 55°C and adding from about 1 to about 5 pbw of a 30 to 35 wt% aqueous solution of hydrogen peroxide per each 100 pbw of

carboxymethylcellulose to the dispersion and stirring the dispersion at from about 55 to about 70°C for from about 15 to about 45 minutes to form an aqueous solution of carboxymethylcellulose.

27. (new) The aqueous solution of carboxymethylcellulose of claim 26., wherein the aqueous solution of carboxymethylcellulose is stable.

28. (new) The aqueous solution of carboxymethylcellulose of claim 26., wherein the carboxymethylcellulose which is dispersed in step a. has a degree of substitution between about 0.6 and about 0.8.

29. (new) The aqueous solution of carboxymethylcellulose of claim 26., wherein the carboxymethylcellulose which is dispersed in step a. has a Brookfield viscosity at 4 wt% of between about 20 and about 500 mPa*s, at 20°C and 20 rpm.